

The entire Betsie River is canoeable from Green Lake downstream, however, during low-flow periods some carries may be necessary in the upper reaches above Thompsonville. Portages are necessary at the Thompsonville and Homestead Dams. The moderate to fast current of the Betsie makes it an enjoyable stream to canoe. Although there are numerous riffle areas, none would pose a threat to the average canoeist. Some boating is done on the lower river between Betsie Lake and Homestead Dam. This section of river is large enough to handle small outboards and these craft are used mostly during the spring and steelhead season.

G. Historic and Archaeological Sites

Although Benzie and Manistee counties are rich in history, sites of historic or archaeological interest have not been authenticated.

Records in the State Archaeological Site File do not show any of these cities in the proposed Natural River District along the Betsie River. If a systematic archaeological survey were undertaken, Indian campsites along the river may be uncovered.

FUTURE USES AND POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

A. Future Uses

Outdoor recreation in a wild-scenic setting is the main attraction of the Betsie River. As more and more people migrate north to utilize their leisure time, it can be expected that the Betsie will feel the effects of increased use. More hunters, fishermen, canoeists, campers and private dwellings will eventually detract from this pleasant atmosphere.

Many areas of private land in the Natural River District are intended for land development and some are currently being developed. The potential for degrading the natural character of the river is present and will depend a great deal on how these properties are developed.

There are no water development projects presently planned by the DNR, Waterways Division. The Fish Division has funds for the removal. The Fish Division has funds for the removal of Homestead Dam, but there is no definite timetable for its removal. The Fish Division also investigated the possibility of siphoning cold water out of Green Lake, and rechannelling the river around the Grass Lake Flooding to improve water temperatures for trout; however, cost estimates indicate that this proposal is currently impractical.

B. Natural Problems

In addition to warm stream temperatures which adversely effect trout populations the most serious problem is streambank erosion. The existing 23,000 feet of serious eroding streambanks are being stabilized by a stream improvement

project. Erosion is an active force which will continue to encroach on the land. Until completely controlled, bank cutting will endanger several cottages that were built too close to the river in the past.

EXISTING AND PROPOSED LOCAL ZONING

Benzie County has a Planning Commission which is presently working on a county plan. They intend to have the plan and a tentative zoning ordinance prepared for the county by July 1, 1973.

Of the six townships in Benzie County, through which the Betsie River flows, three have comprehensive zoning ordinances and three have zoning boards presently working on zoning ordinances. Springdale Township in Manistee County does not have a zoning board or zoning ordinance.

LAWS AND PROGRAMS REINFORCING OBJECTIVES OF THE NATURAL RIVERS PROGRAM

A number of Michigan laws now authorize Department of Natural Resources' programs or activities for the protection of rivers. Officials administering the Natural Rivers Program for the protection of the Betsie River should utilize these statutes in implementing the plan objectives of the river and its tributaries. (See Appendix A)

The proposed Department of Natural Resources' program to establish rules for river use on heavily-used streams may also be directed toward protecting natural rivers--particularly those rivers where recreational use is or may be expected to be quite heavy. The rules have been designed to protect the river resources and recreational experiences that are characteristic of a particular stream.

PRELIMINARY NATURAL RIVER PLAN

A. Proposed Designation

Development of recreation homes and homesites on the Betsie River have been increasing rapidly in recent years. The concern of local citizens and governmental units on the effect this development will have on the remaining natural portions of the Betsie prompted the six townships and others in Benzie County to petition the DNR to study the Betsie River for possible Natural River designation. It was found that although many areas of private land along the river is or will be developed in the near future, there are still many miles of stream in a natural state with scenic and other recreational values worth preserving.

It is recommended that the following portions of the Betsie River system be classified and managed as a wild-scenic river and be designated as a Natural River by the Natural Resources Commission under Part 305, P.A. 451 of 1994:

The 50-mile mainstream of the Betsie River from Grass Lake Dam, Benzie County downstream to its mouth at Betsie Lake, and the Thompsonville